

Visa Officer Richard: Welcome to tonight's webchat on student visas!

Did you know, for the first time in 2011, the U.S. Embassy and U.S. Consulates in China processed more than one million visa applications, a 34% increase over the past year? This included over 160,000 applications for student visas. Chinese are now the largest foreign national group of students in the United States at U.S. universities and colleges. We want to encourage even more Chinese to study in the United States. We're intent on making the process of applying for and obtaining a visa to travel to the United States as efficient and as quick and as convenient as possible. In addition to encouraging more Chinese students to studying in the United States, the U.S. government is also encouraging more American students to study in China. Through his 100K Strong Initiative, President Obama seeks to increase the number of American students studying in China to 100,000 over the next four years.

As for student visas, one thing we would like to remind returning students (those who have already started their studies in the United States and will be returning to continue their studies) is that they can use our drop-box service. For people who have traveled to the U.S. before, if your visa has not yet expired or has been expired for less than one year, you don't have to come in person to interview. You can drop off your passport and get a new visa. Please see our website for further details.

We want to encourage all individuals interested in studying in the United States to plan ahead, apply well in advance of your intended travel, and consult our web site for the most up-to-date and authoritative information on how you can prepare your visa application. Remember, you can apply for your student visa up to 120 in advance of when you are to begin your studies. The earlier you apply for your student visa, the easier the process will be.

Thank you again for participating in tonight's webchat, visa officers Richard Fitzmaurice and Erin Ramsey Wilhelm are ready to take your questions on all aspects of student visas.

Yansi: hello, I had a visa which is F1, but the expired day is October, 2011. and I am still in America and having class. I am unable to go back to china and renew my visa. so, will it affect the transit when I go back to china?

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: Your visa must be valid when you enter the United States. You can stay in the United States after your visa expires as long as you are still going to school. An expired visa will not prevent you from re-entering China. You will have to get a new visa before you leave China and return to the United States.

t: Hi, I have a question. If I get the passport back to the U.S. before the visa expires, then how should I do?

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: You must be in China in order to renew your visa. You can wait until you return to China for a school break to renew your visa.

Andi Ye: I am a high school senior studying in Southlands Christian Schools in the United States. I went back to China on November 26th. However, when I am trying to go back to America, I realized that my student visa had expired. I submitted a request to renew my visa at once on December 4th. Also, as I am

hurrying back for the final exams, which is very important for my college application, I asked to school to help me to contact with the embassy in China. The school had sent a letter to explain my situation (attached). However, it has been a week from December 4th and neither the school nor I have gotten any feedback from the embassy. I am so worry because my final exams is starting on December 15th.

Could you please help me?

Visa Officer Richard: Andi - Thanks for your question. If you are a resident of the Guangzhou Consular District, you should immediately request an expedited interview date through our website at: <http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/niv-inquiry-form.html>. We cannot guarantee you an expedited interview, but we will take your request into consideration. If you are a resident of another Consular district, you should request an expedited visa interview through the website of the Embassy or the Consulate in your district.

yan: 我的问题是，我申请了美国的一所大学，它的开学日期是 2012 年的 1 月 3 号，可是我打了很多次的预约电话都约不到面试的时间，我该怎么办？谢谢

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: Information on how to request an expedited appointment can be found in response to the question above.

WANG: I have got J2 visa in 2004, is it helpful to apply for F1 visa?

Visa Officer Richard: Thanks Wang. If you properly followed the rules of your previous J2 visa, that may be taken into consideration by the visa officer when you are applying for your F1 visa.

杨女士: 我儿子已在美国学习 2 年（加州大学圣地亚哥分校，付瑞），符合函签条件。他 12 月 31 日回到北京，准备 2012 年 1 月 28 日返回美国。我们住在福州市，如何能在明年 1 月 20 前获得签证？是否去领馆面签会快一些？

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: All applicants that are eligible to use the drop box visa renewal service are strongly encouraged to use this service. It saves considerable time for the applicant and does not require the applicant to travel to Guangzhou.

盛博 2011: I wonder the F2 visa could be applied at the same time with F1 visa.

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: Yes, as long as your spouse has a valid I-20, you can both apply at the same time.

Alice: I have applied for F1 visa once but failed. The Visa Officer only looked at my passport and asked me one question that, "Why do you choose this school?" My answer focused on the academy's academic background and extra activities. After that, he told to me, "I'm sorry, I can't give you visa." What can I do the next time? Can you help me?

Visa Officer Richard: Thanks for your question Alice. When making a decision regarding visa issuance, the interviewing officer takes into consideration numerous factors. Principally, the interviewing officer is seeking to assess the applicant's ties to China and the likelihood of whether the applicant will properly

complete his/her studies in the United States and return to China after graduation. Depending on the particular applicant and his/her situation, the interviewing officer may ask more, or fewer, questions. You are always welcome to apply again, but unless your situation has changed since your last interview or you have significant new evidence to present, the decision may not change.

ZLLiang: 您好！ 有一件签证相关事情请教您！我在美国念硕士，第一次 F1 签证是在加拿大渥太华美国使馆签的（2010 年 6 月），还没有回国过，寒假想回国，请问我这种情况是否可以使用中信代签？非常急，飞机是下周二的，谢谢!! (10 秒前)

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: According to the Consulate's drop off visa requirements, you can only use the drop box service in the location where you normally live. If you live in Canada and are just visiting in China, then you need to either come in for interview or apply in Canada. If your home is in China, you are eligible to use our drop box service.

李颖 Charlene: Hello, I'm a student from Guangdong University of Foreign Studies and recently I take part in a 4-month short term credit program of UCR, and maybe during the interview I will be asked about the study plan. So, if I mention about my plan: to experience exotic culture and spread Chinese culture in my study plan, will I be regarded having immigrant inclination? Thank you for answering.

Visa Officer Richard: Thanks Charlene. We always encourage applicants to tell the truth regarding their purpose of travel, regardless of the reason. Sometimes applicants feel they have to tell the visa officer something that is not true, but that is usually what gets them into trouble. If you tell the truth, then the interviewing officer can properly assess your situation and make a correct decision.

chandler: what materials do I need for F-1 renew??

Visa Officer Richard: Hi Chandler. If your F1 visa has expired less than a year ago, and you will be returning to the same school and program as before, we encourage you to apply through our drop-box service. You also need to apply through the drop-box service in your Consular district. To find more information about how to apply through the drop-box in Guangzhou, please go to:
<http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/drop-off-service.html> .

Stella: Dear Sir/Madam, I am Stella, a graduate student in Sun Yat-sen University. I'm applying for a Fall 2012 PhD program in the US, which will take at least five years. Last month I have submitted application to the school. Now I want to visit the school during my winter vacation in Jan 2012. Is that possible to get a visa? Thank you.

Visa Officer Richard: Thanks Stella. You are more than welcome to apply for a B1/B2 visa now to visit your school this winter. Just explain to the visa officer your purpose of your travel so that he or she can make a proper decision.

cat: 请问去美国读语言有年龄限制吗？我 25 了，想出去一年。program 是一年的，我只准备一年的费用可以吗？

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: There is no age limit on a student visas. Applicants of any age are eligible to apply for a student visa. The officer will examine your individual situation and make a decision. By law you are required to show that you can pay for at least the first year of school.

罗育培: 签证官您好! 请问: 我女儿今年 7 月份到美国读语言学校。我夫妇俩如何申请去美国探望女儿? 签证是多少期间? 可以带我的侄女(1998 年出生) 去吗?

Visa Officer Richard: Dear Luo Yu Pei: Thank you for your question. You are welcome to apply for a B1/B2 tourist visa to visit your daughter in the United States. During your visa interview, please explain that your daughter is a student and that you wish to visit her. We also suggest that you bring in photocopies of your daughter's passport and U.S. student visa, as well as proof of your relationship with her, such as photographs. A tourist visa is valid for one year. Your niece is also welcome to apply for a tourist visa, but please keep in mind that each applicant will be assessed separately.

light: If application require further administrative processing for about 4 weeks. But I-20 form states that there is not enough time for checking. Would the department of states still process the application material?

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: If your application requires administrative processing, the administrative processing must be completed before you can receive a visa. If your I-20 will expire before you can get your visa, you can ask your school to extend the date on your I-20.

Huang Yan: Hello, I am a student from Nan Fang College of Sun Yat Sen University, I am preparing to study my master program in Northeastern University. But I have just been refused in 2011 December 2nd. My master program will begin in 2012 January 9th, but even though I call every day, there is no time before January 9th, what I know is there is a interview in 2012 January 9th. Is that means the interview will not open before January 9th 2012?

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: Information on how to request an expedited visa appointment can be found on our website at <http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/niv-contact-us.html>

Xiao: Q: My sister's English is poor, but now she wants to apply for studying in USA. My question: is that possible?

Visa Officer Richard: Yes, it is possible for your sister to apply for a student visa even though she is not yet proficient in English. Some applicants apply for student visas specifically to study English in the United States. Some academic programs also do not require English proficiency and may include English training as a part of the program. The only applicants who must conduct their visa interview in English are those whose academic program in the United States requires English proficiency.

Stella: Dear officer, I'm Stella, a graduate student from Sun Yat-sen University. I have applied for a Fall 2012 PhD program in the United States. I want to see the campus and learn more about the program. Can I get a visitor visa to go there during my winter vacation? Do you require the US school's invitation letter?

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: Stella: An invitation letter from the US school is not required for you to apply for a B1/B2 visa, but it may help the visa officer to understand your purpose of travel.

bao: 你好!我今天电话预约一个 F-1 签证面试的时间, 也得到了一个预约号, 不过, 我太紧张了, 有点担心, 自己是不是弄错时间了, 想再查一下, 我这个预约号是不是在广州领馆的 12 月 29 号, 但在你们的网站上找不到可查的地方, 是不是还需要再次电话去查呢?

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: Bao: The Consulate is unable to verify your appointment date a time. You should contact the call center to verify your appointment.

Rebecca: 请问如何办理, 并且我是免面签的, 我需要多久才可以拿到我的新签证

Visa Officer Richard: Rebecca: Thank you for your question. In order to renew your student visa, you need to have a valid I-20. You therefore need to renew your I-20 before you apply to renew your student visa.

Alan: Alan: 您好, 请问一下你们网页中让申请人填表时应注意事项中: 如果您的名字由两个汉字组成, 当您回答表格上的问题“您曾用过其它名字吗?(婚前、宗教、专业以及其它别名等)”, 请选择“是”。然后输入您的姓及名字, 您名字的两个字之间必须空格。我问过成功签证的人, 他们都填 NO, 到底怎样填? 谢谢

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: Alan: In order to assist the Consulate to determine your identity and your visa record, please follow the instructions on the DS-160 and submit an alias with a space between the two parts of your given name. For example, if your Chinese name is 林爱丽, then on your DS 160 you would write Lin, AiLi as your name and Lin, Ai Li as your alias.

流浪汉: 我是一个 35 岁的高校老师, 想去美国读博士, 可行吗? 已经在北京结婚、生子、买房。

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: Please see the answer to the question asked by "cat." There is no age limit when applying for a student visa. The officer will look at your current situation and make a decision based on the information you give them at interview.

Alice 2: I took the F-1 visa interview last time, he just asked me a problem and don't saw any other applicant materials, why not give me more chances, it's time to the new semester, I 'm anxious.

Visa Officer Richard: Alice: Thank you for your question. In making a decision, visa officers take into consideration a wide-range of factors, but they are principally seeking to assess applicants' ties to China and their intentions, including whether they will properly complete their studies in the United States and then return to China. While applicants may bring supporting documents, such as bank statements, to the interview, officers may not need to see such supporting documents before making a decision. Officers primarily will make a decision based on the conversation they have with the applicant. We therefore encourage all applicants to be honest regarding their intentions so officers can make a proper decision.

灰灰: 我想问下为什么最近拒签率那么高?

Visa Officer Richard: Hui Hui, thank you for your question, as it provides us an opportunity to clarify a misperception. Actually, the vast majority of visa applications in China are approved. Currently, 90% of visa applications in China are approved, including the overwhelming majority of student visa applications.

lin: 你好，签证官，有一个问题想问你一下，是不是所有的申请人可以选择不同地区的使馆去约签证？如果有补拒签过，是不是一定要在第一次面谈的使馆再约面谈呢？谢谢你的回答。

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: According to the U.S. Embassy policy, found here: http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/niv_info.html you have the choice of interviewing at the Consulate or Embassy in the district in which you reside, or at a Consulate or Embassy with a shorter wait time than that of your home district.

lin: 如果一次被拒，那么再约签证的时间一般要等多久呢？

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: Every Consulate and Embassy has a different wait period. Some of them require applicants who have been refused in the last two years to apply on a certain day. The current wait times for all of the US Consulates in China can be found in the link I posted on your last question. Please visit the web site of the Consulate or Embassy at which you would like to apply to find their individual policies.

OLD CAT: Good evening Richard&Erin Wilhelm. If I Will be get the U.S.A. community school admission notice at 06-06-2012, when is the latest date for The visa interview?

Visa Officer Richard: Dear Old Cat, you can apply for your student visa 120 days in advance of when you will begin your studies in the United States. We encourage all student visa applicants to apply at least three months in advance. If you wait too long to apply for your student visa, it may not be processed in time for you to begin your studies. As we like to tell our student visa applicants: apply early, apply right!

Stella: dear officer, do I need to arrange for the accommodation in US and show relevant documents, if I want to travel to visit a US school?

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: Stella, for more information on how to apply for a B1/B2 visa, please visit the US Department Of State's website at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1262.html

Patrick: I used to study in a private school in America, but for some reason I got back to China. Let me tell you my story first, last year I used a L2 visa to study in the US. In 2011, my mom and I applied for a extend of work visa, but we got refused from the Immigration organization. After a while, we decided to reapplied a work visa, and this time they accepted it. They told us to go back to China and renew it in the Embassy. Three months ago, we applied for it and got nothing back. I am still at school, so my question is that "is there a way for me to go back to US"?

Visa Officer Richard: Patrick: Thank you for question. When making a decision, an interviewing officer is primarily seeking to determine an applicant's intentions and ties to China. You are always welcome to

apply again. However, unless there is a change in your situation, or you have significant new evidence to present, the decision is unlikely to change.

Stella: dear officer, I have never been abroad. I am not sure whether I will be refused and never have a chance to go to US. What may be the reason of being permanently refused? thank you

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: It is possible for an applicant to get a visa even if they have never been to the United States. The most important thing to remember during your visa interview is to tell the truth. In a majority of cases, being refused a visa does not mean that you are permanently refused. The officer bases their decision on your current situation. If your situation changes, it is possible that you could then be issued a visa. There are only a few ways to be permanently refused a visa and they usually involve not telling the truth on your visa application or at the visa interview.

Huang Yan: Hello, there is an interview in 2012 January 18th, but I did not apply because it is too late, My master program will begin in 2012 January 9th, I want to know is that means there is no interview between now from January 9th?

Visa Officer Erin Wilhelm: Information on how to apply for an expedited visa appointment can be found on our website here: <http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/niv-application-procedures.html>

Kim、: 您好，我是自己申请的学校。但只申请了语言课程。我很想告诉你我的想法有多愚蠢。一开始我认为我的 I-20 是一年，我只能说我要学习一年，之后必须回国。不能有其他的学习计划。所以，在我爸爸的公司出具了录用证明。以证明我一年后会回国工作。而我真实的学习计划是学完语言再学习我的专业课程。在第一次面签中，我没有获得 VISA。因为我没有说出我真实的计划。事后我感到非常的后悔和自责。我想对那位善良而友好的 VO，说一句：“I'm sorry”同时我也知道了诚实的重要性。真的很抱歉。我已经预约了第二次面签，这次我会毫无保留的和 VO 交谈。诚实的回答 VO 的每一个问题。发这个信息，我只想说，我很抱歉，对我不诚实的行为，我感到十分自责。I'm so sorry. Please forgive me.

Visa Officer Richard: Kim: Thank you for your explanation. We always encourage applicants to tell the truth to avoid misunderstandings such as the one you describe above. Sometimes applicants who otherwise may have been issued visas are refused because they did not tell the truth. Once a visa officer believes an applicant is not being truthful, he or she may begin to doubt an applicant's entire story. It is therefore imperative that visa applicants always tell the truth when filling out their visa applications and during their visa interviews.

Visa Officer Richard Thanks everyone for participating in tonight's webchat on student visas and asking such good questions. We really enjoyed communicating with all of you and look forward to participating in future webchats on visas. If you have additional questions that were not answered tonight, we suggest that you visit our website at <http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/student-visas.html>, which has a lot of good information on student visas.

One last piece of advice: apply early, apply right! We encourage all student visa applicants to apply at least three months in advance of their studies. This is especially important during the summer, our busiest season. In order to ensure your visa is processed in time, please apply early!